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Title: Lynne Darkthorne

Author: Lynne Darkthorne  
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The young woman sits at  
her desk piled high with  
dusty tomes. Sighing, she  
brushes a stray lock of  
her pale blue hair from  
her eyes as she flips  
through the pages of an  
old book. An evil chuckle  
makes itself heard,  
and she looks over and  
gives an angry glare to a  
head sitting in the center  
of the pentagram on  
her floor. "What are  
you laughing about, foul  
thing?" she says to  
it. "Foolish little girl,  
your answers aren't  
there.." it replies, giving  
another evil cackle. Too  
tired to argue with the  
thing, her tired eyes  
settle once again on the  
open pages, searching  
desperately for the  
answers she seeks. As  
the candles burn lower,  
the sleepless nights  
catch up to her,  
and eye lids closing, her  
head slowly sinks down,  
and the darkness of  
sleep draws her in.

She finds herself deep in  
the midst of a forest lit  
only by the few pale  
shafts of moonlight that  
are able to make their  
way through the dense  
canopy of leaves overhead.  
The sound of delicate  
footsteps catches her  
attention, and turning her  
head, her eyes catch  
glimpse of a young girl  
carefully picking her way  
through the underbrush.

She remains silently  
watching as the girl  
absently tugs her skirt  
away from the grasp of  
the branches of  
scattered bushes. The girl  
suddenly kneels down, and  
with a smile begins prying  
bits of blood moss off  
of a fallen log, and then  
carefully places the  
regents into a pouch. As  
the woman watches, the  
girl's head suddenly  
rises, and tilting her  
head upward, begins  
sniffing the breeze. A  
look of confusion crosses  
the girl's face, and her  
gaze rises up towards  
the sky, bare glimpses of  
an orange glow beginning  
to brighten the night sky.  
A look of horror crosses  
the girl's face as the  
pouch is dropped, now  
forgotten onto the  
ground. The woman, begins  
shaking her head, and  
calls out to the girl,  
"No!! Don't go there!!"  
The girl seems to not  
hear the woman's frantic  
calling, and quickly  
stumbles toward the  
nearby path, breaking  
into a run as she  
reaches the cleared way  
heading toward the  
ever brightening glow.

The woman chases after  
the girl, still calling out  
towards her, "Please!  
Stay!" Losing sight of the  
girl around a bend, the  
woman runs harder  
after her, and then  
stops dead as she  
reaches the edge of a  
clearing. Before her, lies  
a cottage, engulfed in  
flames. Frantically, her  
gaze searches the  
area, and her lip begins  
to tremble slightly as her  
eyes settle upon the  
sight of the girl cradling

the head of a bloody woman. Wrenching her eyes away, the woman can see the signs of a struggle, and a sharpened dagger lying nearby, the blade's steel hidden by blood. Slowly walking towards the two, she can hear the dying woman's whispers to the little girl.

"My.. darling... I'm.. I'm sorry..." The girl tries to quiet the wounded woman, gently brushing her hair from her face, and kissing the woman's forehead. The woman on the ground struggles to raise her hand, and the girl reaches out as the woman again whispers "My.. gift... take it.. find one.. who.. can help.. you learn.. it.." As their hands meet the bright glimmer begins shining between their hands, and then bursts into a bright hot light. The girl's eyes widen in shock and surprise as the dying woman uses the last of her strength to unleash a great power within the small body. As the light fades, the woman takes one final ragged breath, and then relaxes. The girl's head arches back and as the body begins cooling in her arms, letting out an anguished scream of pain.

The sleeping woman awakens with a start from the nightmare that is her past, the sound of her own pained scream echoing in her ears. Sighing she rubs the sleep from her eyes, and glances around her own little cottage. A cruel smile forms on her lips

as her pale eyes settle  
on the mangled bodies  
lying strewn across the  
floor. "Failed experiments...  
but their deaths were  
the desired outcome  
anyway... I've at least  
fulfilled part of the  
promise I made to my  
mother those years ago.."

She again looks at  
the books piled about in  
frustration. The head's  
eyes look toward the  
woman as she pushes  
away from her desk,  
and slowly rises to her  
feet. Giving her a  
mocking look, it grins  
at her. "I tell you again  
and again, you won't find  
the answers in those  
books, girl." Frowning at  
it, she retorts back, "As  
if you had answers! I've  
vowed to have my mother  
back, and I will not rest  
until it happens!" It looks  
up at her, gauging how  
far it can go before  
angering its mistress  
completely. "You aren't  
even what she wanted you  
to be... She was a  
white witch.. and you  
are nothing but a cold  
hearted girl, who has no  
control over the Gift she  
was given.." The woman  
takes a deep breath, not  
wanting to rise to  
the familiar's baiting.  
Grinning, it knows it hit  
a nerve as it watches  
her. Remaining calm, she  
eyes it back, "You know  
perfectly well that  
people claim to be good  
and full of virtue... yet  
they throw those words  
about for convinience.  
'Good' people wouldn't slay  
a woman who only wanted  
to help them! My mother  
had nothing but desire to  
help others! Look what  
happened!! She was

betrayed by those who  
scorned her by day, and  
crept to her for  
help in the dark of  
night!" The head glances  
at the nearby bodies.  
Catching the look, she  
pauses. "Yes.. I'm as much  
of a killer as they were..  
but I at least admit my  
nature rather than deny  
it! And I would not have  
them running about to do  
to another of my kind  
that they did to  
my mother.." Stepping  
towards the door, she  
pauses as the head  
whispers, sounding a bit  
nervous. "He is.. here..."  
Turning her head to look  
at it, she raises a brow.  
"He, who?" she asks. The  
thing closes its eyes, and  
refuses to speak. Shaking  
her head in disgust, she  
steps outside, into the  
cool night air. As she  
steps away from the  
cottage, she stops, looking  
around, as it seems to  
her that the pitch black  
night appears to grow  
darker suddenly.

As she stands there, a  
white-maned figure steps  
purposefully toward her.  
Her eyes widen in  
surprise as the man  
comes into view, as  
she chose the spot of  
her cottage for its  
solitude. Her hand raises  
as she begins tracing the  
sigils of an attack spell  
into the air, and stops in  
mid-gesture as his eyes  
lock onto hers. She  
involuntarily takes a small  
step back as she realizes  
how much more powerful  
he is than her, an uneasy  
feeling beginning to grip  
her. "Lynne, the answers  
you seek can be found.  
Prove yourself worthy of  
them, lass." Unable to

speak, she stares in disbelief as he takes her hand, and presses a scroll bearing a seal with an ebon-colored skull on it into her palm.

"I am Xavori. I know what you are. You need guidance, lass. I hope to see you again." With that, he bows, and steps back fading into the night. As he disappears from view, she hears his voice whispering in her ears,

"Walk in Darkness.."

As the shock begins to wear off, she stares at the scroll, and then slowly turns, and walks back into the cottage. Sinking down into the chair in front of her desk, she stares blankly at the scroll. "I.. I don't understand.. he... KNEW me." A soft voice comes from the floor in front of her desk, "Of course he did... now do as he says, girl." Nodding slowly, she breaks the seal, and begins reading the scroll. Her hand reaches out and taking a fine tipped quill, she dips it in an inkwell, and then carefully begins writing.